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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1945



FARM LABOR PROGRAM
WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION, U.S.D.A.
JANUARY 1945

FEB 22 1945

1945 NEEDS:

FOUR MILLION

including

1½ Million Youth

¾ Million Women

FACTS ABOUT FARM LABOR IN 1945

The farm labor shortage will continue to be serious in 1945, and this year's Farm Labor Program will again call for the recruitment of four million emergency workers to supplement the regular farm work force on a full- or part-time basis. With the exception of the weather, farm labor is the greatest limiting factor in farm production. Developments during the last months of 1944 and early in the new year have made it evident that 1945 will perhaps be the most difficult year yet encountered on the farm labor front.

To begin with, the new farm goals call for a continued high rate of food and fiber production in 1945. At the same time, indications point to the smallest labor force on the farms in many years. This is due to increased demands of the armed forces, plus a further migration to industry.

There is not expected to be a substantial movement of people back to the farms during the present year. Even an early end of the war in Europe would not return a large number of men from the armed services to the farms in time for work on the 1945 crop, owing to the many problems involved in demobilization. Nor is any industrial re-conversion that might follow the European war expected to solve the farm labor shortage. History has shown that people who go to the towns and cities in time of great industrial activity, do not return to the farms as long as well-paying jobs in business and industry are available.

What the U. S. Crop Corps Is

The United States Crop Corps is not an organization. The term simply is applied to all those emergency workers who go to the farms to supplement the regular farm work force. Within this group are:

- (1) The youth, 14 through 17, known as Victory Farm Volunteers, and
- (2) the women, 18 and over, who make up the Women's Land Army. These titles are likewise only designations for the groups they represent.

Even those Crop Corps workers who have had no previous farm experience can do many types of farm work successfully. With brief instruction, they can learn to harvest many kinds of fruits and vegetables, pick cotton, stack peanuts, detassel corn, pick up potatoes, and do other farm jobs. Though Crop Corps workers are urged to volunteer for farm work during whatever spare time they have, they do not give their time but are paid prevailing wages.

How Crop Corps Helped in 1944

No one group can take all the credit for getting crops harvested in 1944. The farmers and their families deserve a great deal of credit for working longer hours than ever before. In addition, there was a valuable force of seasonal or part-time emergency workers who helped out with the farm work whenever their other duties would allow it. This group included some rural people, and some others, with farm

backgrounds, now living in the city. But many were town and city people, with no previous experience or knowledge of farm life, who spent vacations or spare time on farms. They included teen-age school youth, college girls, school teachers, clerks, stenographers, housewives, and businessmen.

The 12,000 local farm labor offices in all parts of the country placed 3 million different workers in some $5\frac{1}{2}$ million farm jobs during 1944. Of these $5\frac{1}{2}$ million jobs, $1\frac{1}{2}$ million were filled by youth and three-quarters of a million by women. A less-than-normal percentage of crop loss last year attests to the success of the program.

Sources of Farm Labor

The bulk of the farm work is done by farmers and their families, along with year-round hired help. The farm labor to supplement their efforts, especially for harvest work, comes from these sources:

1. Local and Intrastate -- About 90 percent of the supplemental farm labor comes from within the State of need, often from within the county. This group comprises some persons who usually do farm work, but includes large numbers of nonfarm people who work on farms during spare time as a war contribution.

2. Prisoners of War -- Solution of the farm labor problem has been aided in a number of areas by war prisoners. They may be used on an even larger scale in 1945. Farmers pay prevailing wages for war prisoner labor, the same as for all other farm labor. Amounts in excess of the Army allowances to the prisoners go into the U. S. Treasury.

3. Foreign Workers -- During the war, natives of Mexico and the British West Indies have been brought into this country by the War Food Administration for seasonal farm work. Last year WFA also transported a small number of Newfoundlanders into the Northeastern States and Canadians into Maine. These people from foreign countries have usually made good farm hands, but their numbers are necessarily limited.

4. Interstate Workers -- An important group in some areas consists of farm people who are transported to other States for emergency work during slack periods on their own farms. There are also many town and city people who go to other States for farm work.

5. Miscellaneous -- Other groups that have helped with the farm work include soldiers and sailors on furlough, conscientious objectors, and inmates of penal institutions. Here again, however, these sources can supply only a very small part of the total needs.

Appeals

PATRIOTISM is by far the leading reason why nonfarm people volunteer for emergency farm work. They have come to realize that food is important in the prosecution of the war and that the production and harvesting of crops is an essential war job.

HEALTH may be an important factor in interesting some people in farm work. Those who work in offices and factories throughout the year often find it pleasant and satisfying to spend their vacations out in the open.

MONETARY RETURNS probably rank last among the incentives which get nonfarm people out on the farm. Usually, farm wages cannot compete with the industrial wage scale. However, the pay frequently is an important factor in the employment of youth, and in all-summer employment of teachers and college girls.

How To Enlist for Farm Work

Those who have the entire summer to spare should apply to their county agent or local farm employment office. In those cities where no county agricultural agent is located, there will usually be some kind of local farm labor office where prospective workers can obtain information.

Those who have less than the entire season to devote to farm work (such as week ends or 2-week vacations) should stand by for the local call in their community. This call will come through newspapers, radio, and other means of communication as the work season approaches in that area.

SUMMARY

1. This year will probably bring the most serious farm labor shortage since the war started.
2. The 1945 goals again call for a high rate of farm production.
3. With the exception of the weather, farm labor is probably the greatest limiting factor in farm production.
4. The farm labor shortage can expect no relief during the year from returning war veterans or from the return of industrial workers to the farm.
5. All indications point to a further shrinkage of the farm work force, due both to increased demands of the armed forces and to a further migration to industry.
6. People from the towns and cities must again go into farm work in those areas where emergencies arise. Information can be obtained from the county agent or local farm employment office.
7. Estimated needs in 1945: Four million emergency farm workers, including a million and a half youth and three-quarters of a million women -- mostly for peak-season harvest work.

MAPS INDICATE NEED FOR CROP CORPS WORKERS

In considering farm labor needs for 1945, it is necessary to know when and where extra workers will be needed to supplement the regular farm labor force, consisting of farm family members regularly employed in farm work plus year-round hired workers. The 12 maps presented on the succeeding pages -- one for each month -- are intended to indicate the time and areas of such need.

No effort has been made to show total labor needs. On the contrary, the areas indicated on these maps are those where extra workers will probably be needed to supplement the efforts of the regular farm labor force. In other words, some areas may have a heavy labor demand but may also have a supply of labor sufficient to meet this demand. These areas are not marked for special attention on the map. However, other areas that have a much smaller labor demand, expressed in terms of man-hours, but only a limited supply of on-farm labor, are indicated as serious or critical, depending upon the extent to which the supply fails to meet the demand.

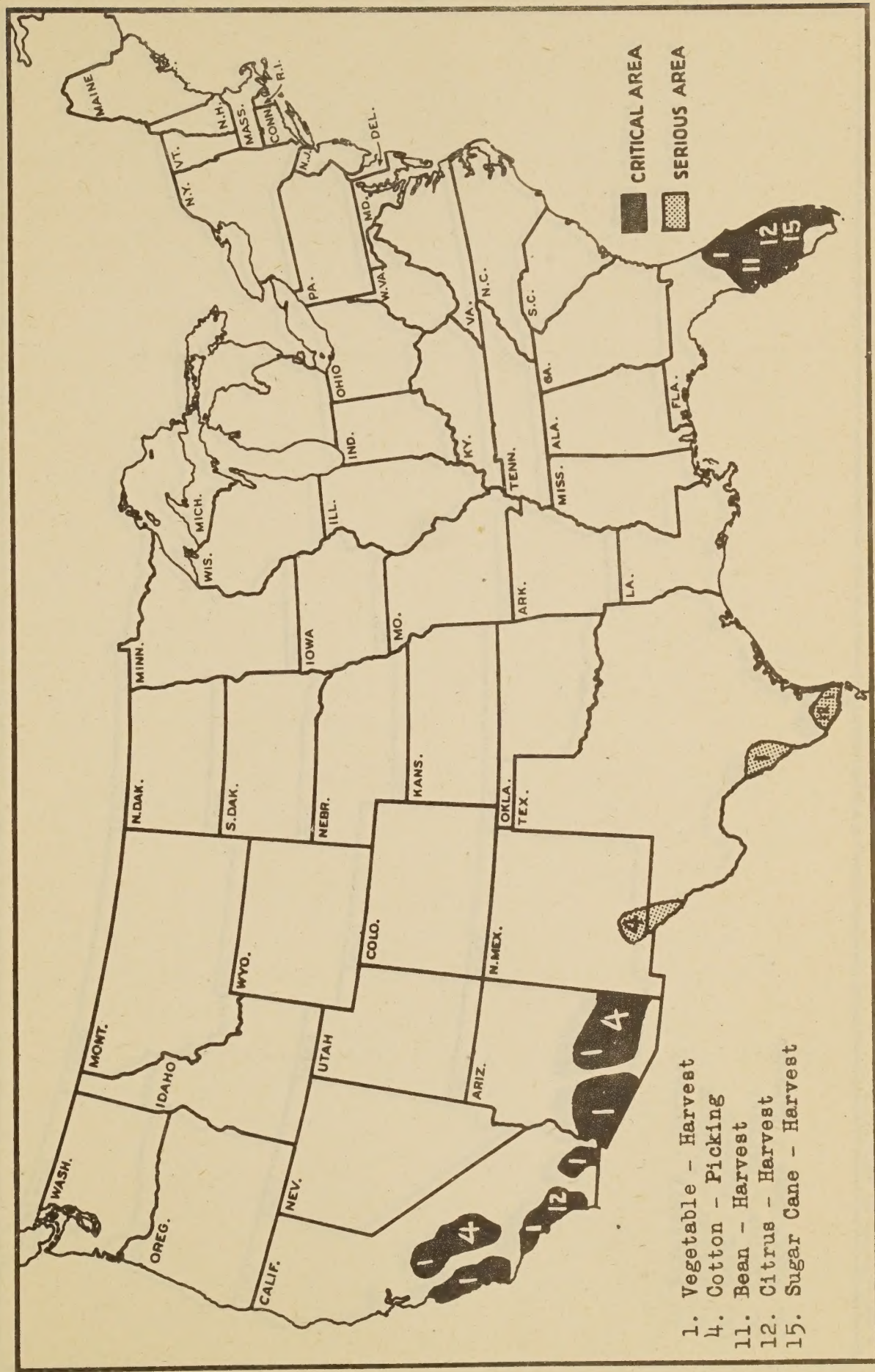
The areas in black are expected to be those in which the need for extra workers is most critical; the shaded areas represent those expected to have a serious labor problem. Areas in which the farm labor need is only moderate are included in the white portion of the maps. These estimates of farm labor needs are based on normal weather conditions. An unusual season might alter not only the time but also the extent of the need.

On a national map, it is not practical to show localized farm labor problems. Therefore, only those problems involving areas that extend into several counties are included in these maps. Information on local labor needs may be obtained from State extension offices or from county agricultural agents.

In addition to indicating the areas and months of farm labor needs, the maps also include the major crops and operations involved in the labor problem. These operations are described briefly on pages 19 to 21.

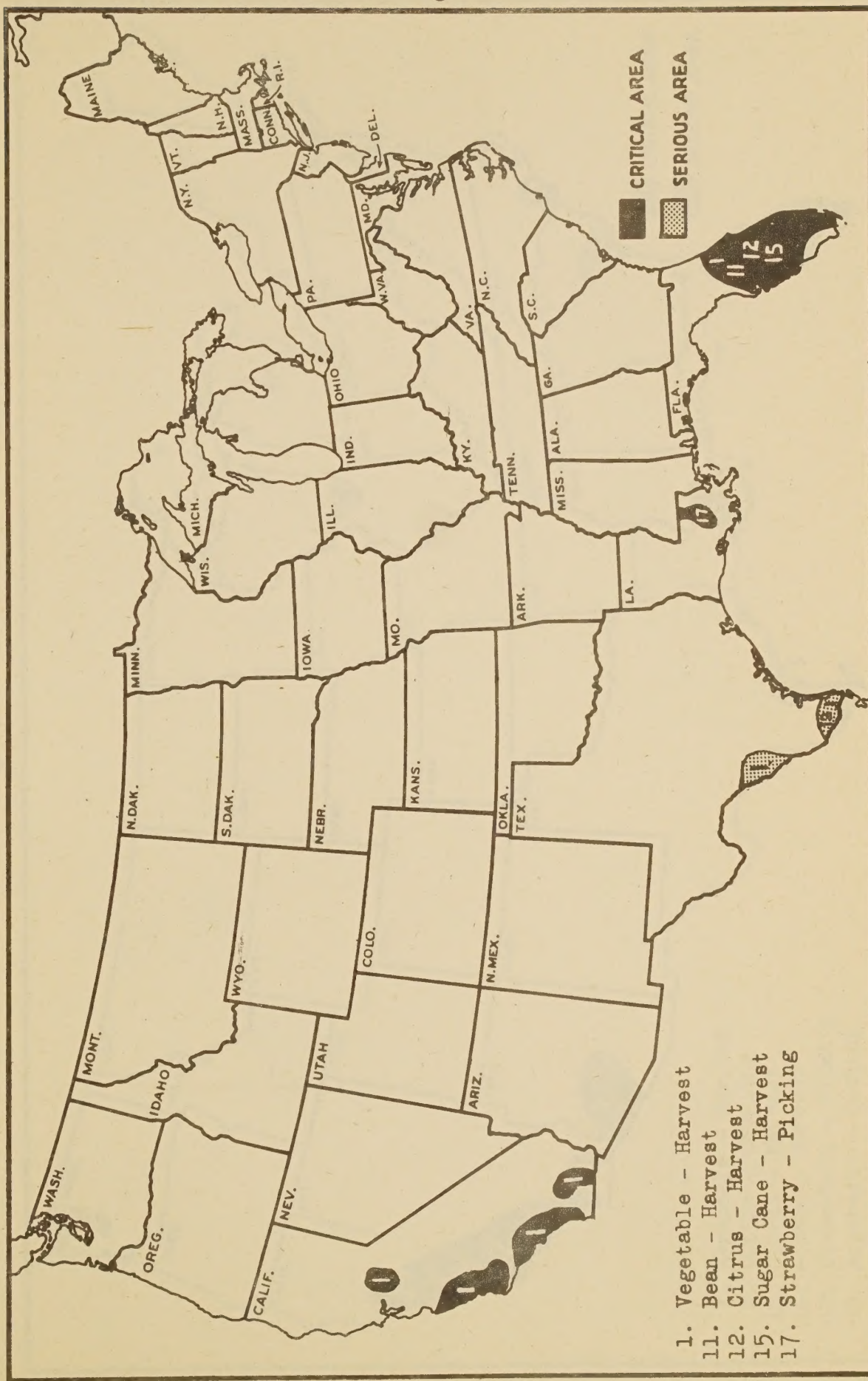
AREAS REQUIRING MOBILIZATION OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

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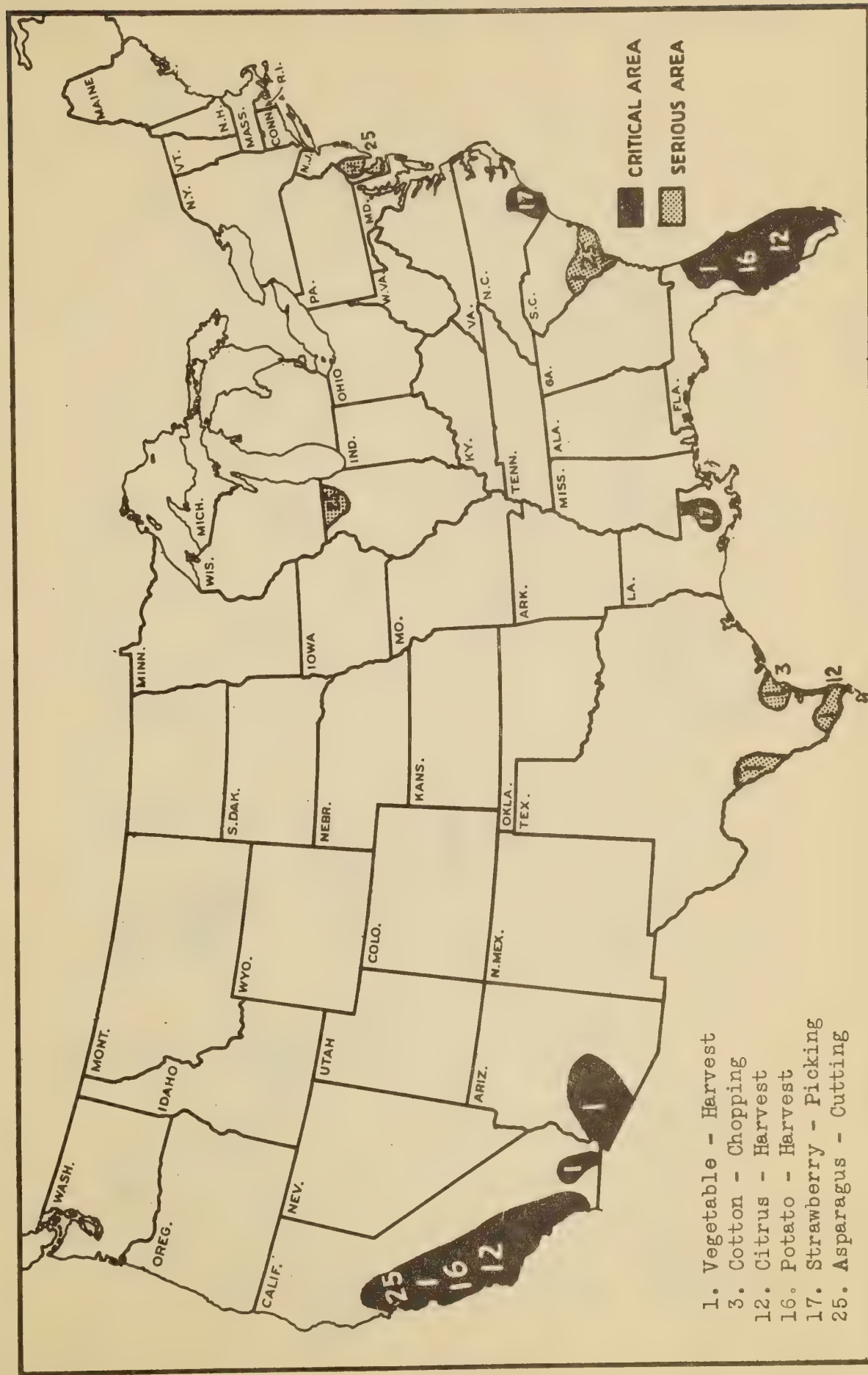
AREAS REQUIRING MOBILIZATION OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

March 1945



AREAS REQUIRING MOBILIZATION OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

April 1945



1. Vegetable - Harvest
3. Cotton - Chopping
12. Citrus - Harvest
16. Potato - Harvest
17. Strawberry - Picking
25. Asparagus - Cutting

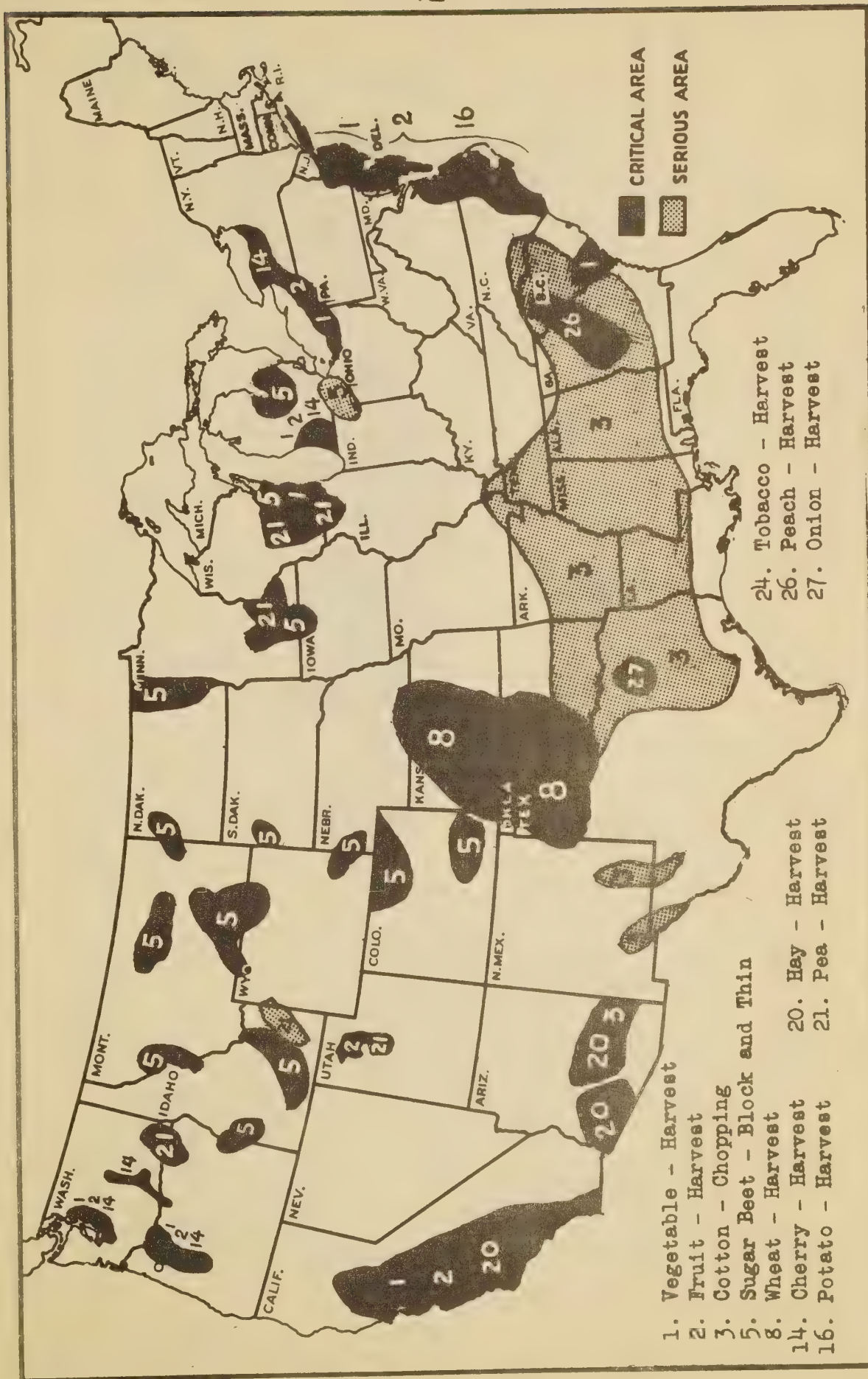
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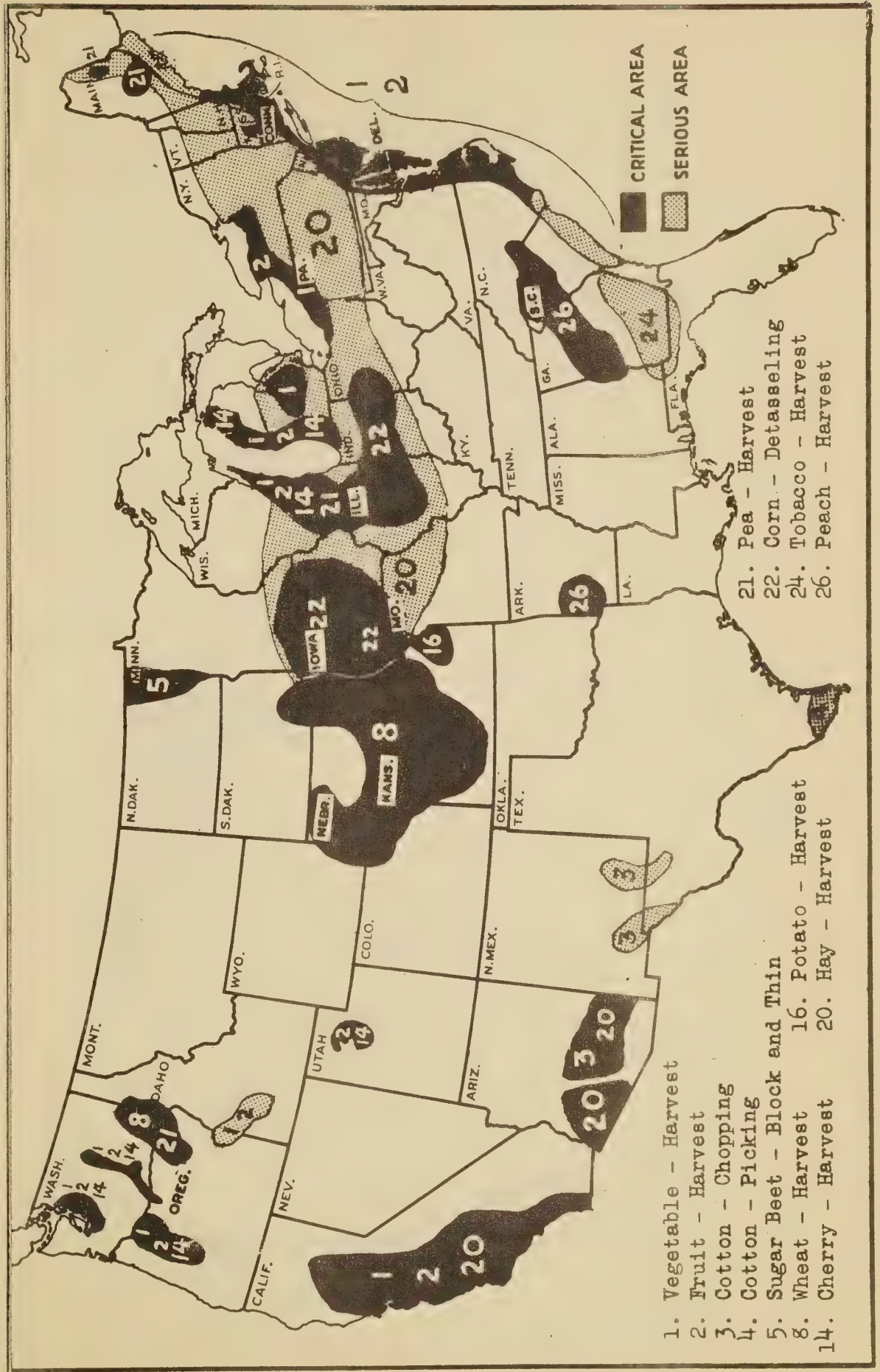
June 1945

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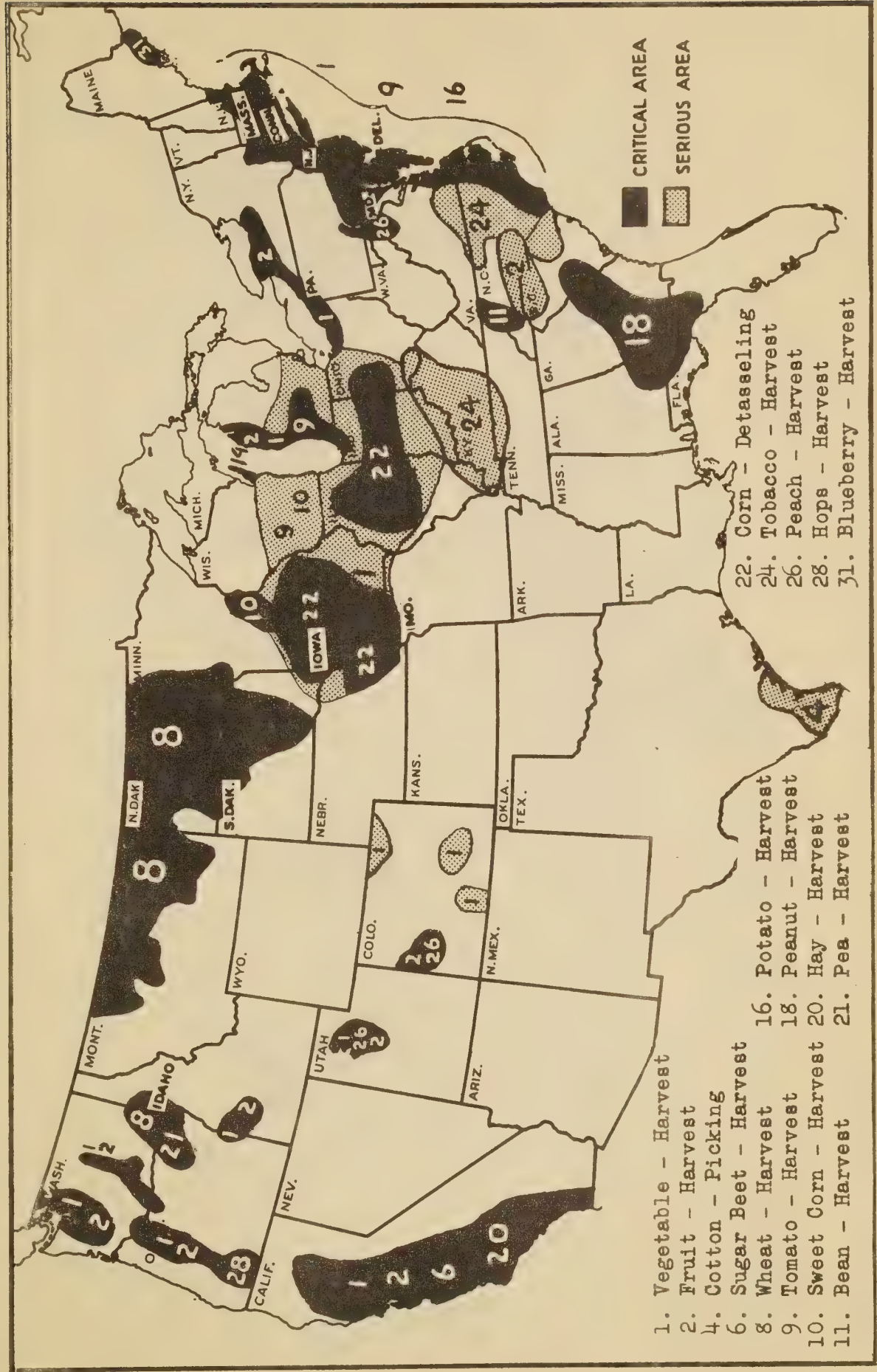
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July 1945



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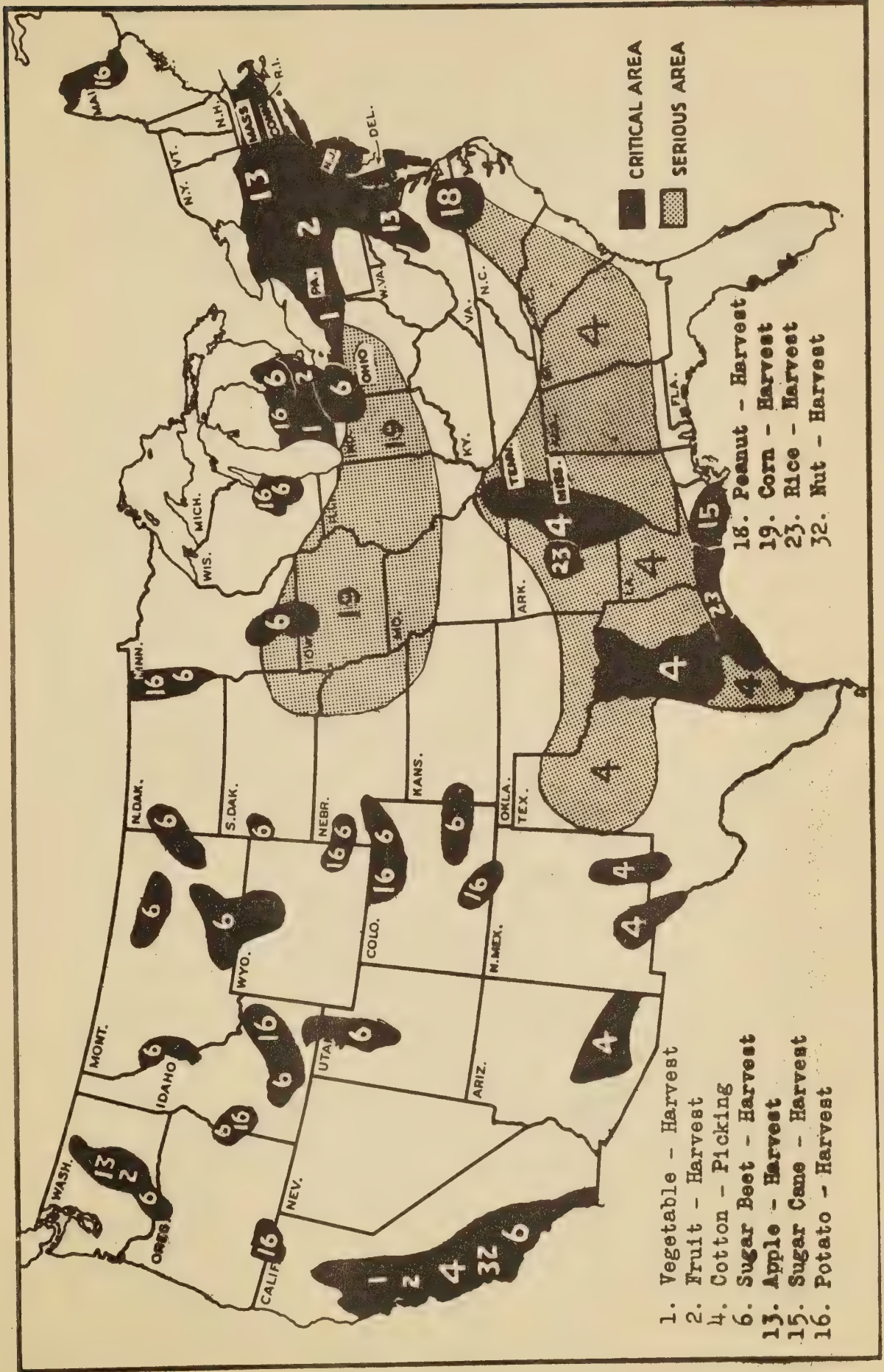


September 1945



AREAS REQUIRING MOBILIZATION OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

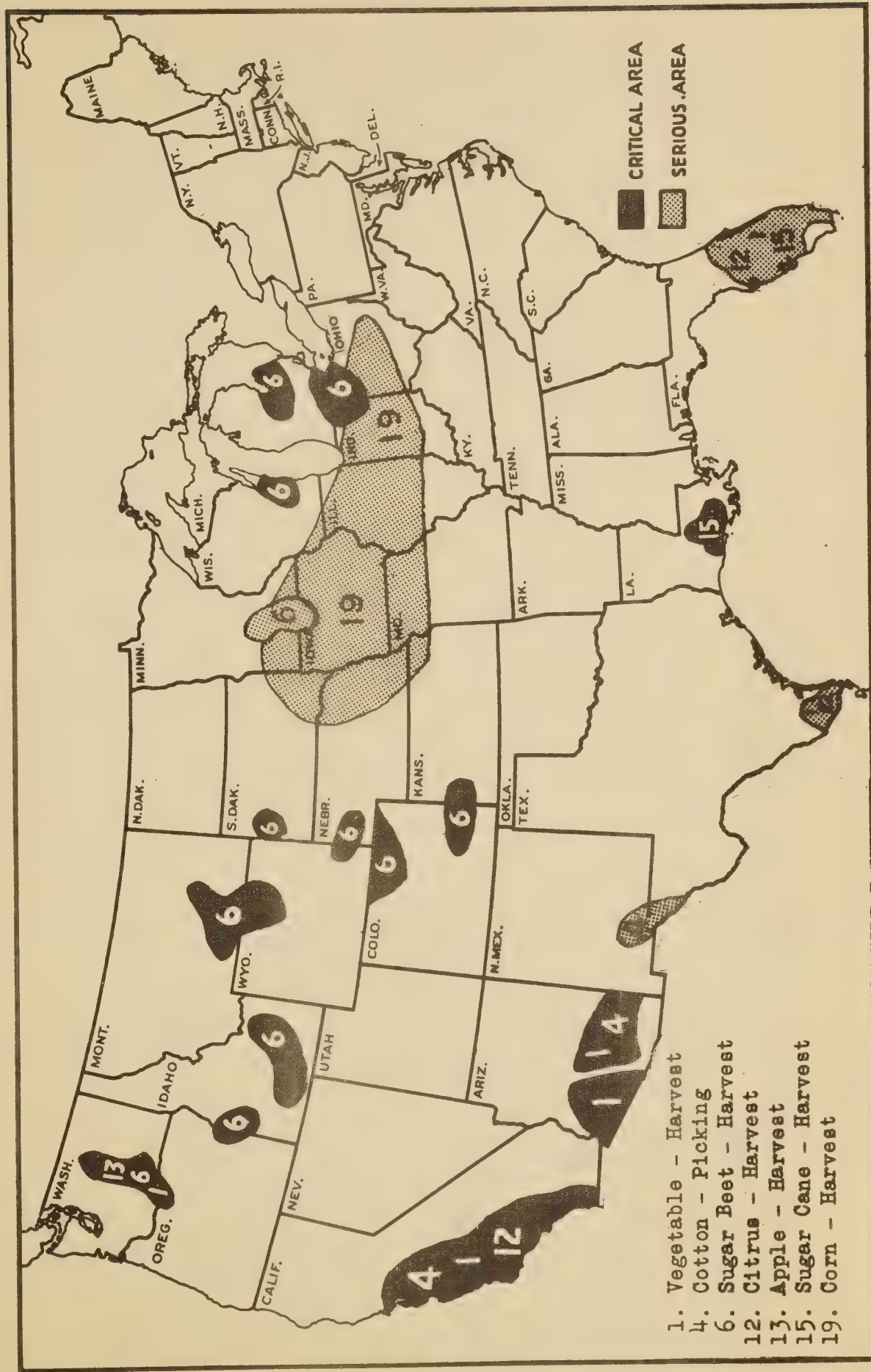
October 1945





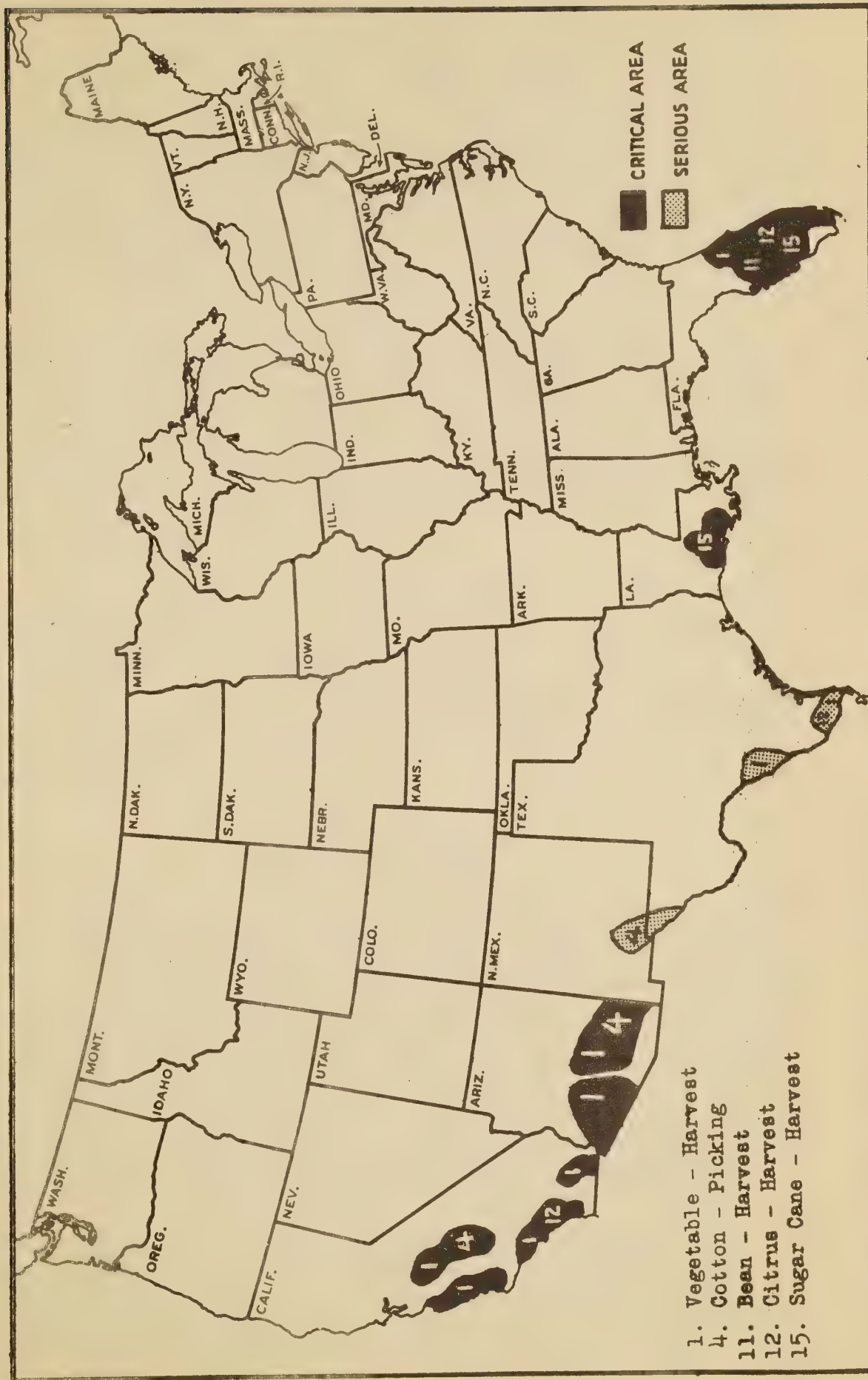
AREAS REQUIRING MOBILIZATION OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

November 1945



AREAS REQUIRING MOBILIZATION OF SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

December 1945



Vegetables are among the principal foods needed for our armed forces and our allies, as well as for our civilian population. Their production is one of the vital wartime jobs being done by American farmers at this time. Harvesting of vegetables presents one of the main farm labor problems, since such a large amount of hand labor is required. However, in the case of tomatoes (9),^{2/} beans (11), asparagus (25), onions (27), and other miscellaneous vegetables (1), much of the harvest work can be done by women and youngsters. Each year these two groups furnish an increasingly larger percentage of the labor for vegetable harvest, as more and more men are drawn into the armed services or war industries. Most of these harvesting operations are relatively simple.

The same is true of most fruits (2), including apples (13), cherries (14), strawberries (17), peaches (26), grapes (30), blueberries (31), and nuts (32). Generally speaking, most of the fruit harvest operations can be done by women and youth. Some farmers have found that women can do an even better job of harvesting, since they are more likely to handle the fruit carefully and thus prevent bruising. Most of these operations are simple ones requiring the picking of fruit from trees or vines. Picking citrus fruit (12) is heavy work usually done by men.

Some women and youth are used during the spring months in cotton chopping (3), which is done by hand with a hoe. It involves a thinning out of the young plants so that those left will have more room to grow, as well as removing weeds and grass. Many more women and youth are used in cotton picking (4), which requires large numbers of workers during the fall months. Picking of cotton from the bolls requires no experience, but maximum speed can be attained only after long practice.

HEAVIER WORK FOR MEN

On the other hand, work with sugar beets and sugarcane is man's work. Sugar-beet blocking and thinning (5) comes during the summer months and consists of thinning out the plants so that those left in the ground may have more room to grow. The sugar-beet harvest (6) occurs during the fall months, frequently under unfavorable weather conditions. The harvesting of beets requires cutting off the tops with a long knife. In some areas, a good many women and young people have done some of the heavy sugar-beet work, but this is usually done by men. In harvesting cane, the stalks not only must be cut off just above the ground, but the tops of the stalks also must be cut and the leaves stripped off. Harvesting of both beets and cane requires a large amount of hand labor, with many weary hours for the worker.

Wheat planting (7) is done mechanically in the major wheat areas, but requires some men in addition to the regular farm labor force. Wheat harvest (8) is also a mechanical operation, but requires much additional labor to supplement the regular farm labor force.

^{2/} Numbers in parentheses indicate crop regions shown on maps.

Adult male workers are required for most of the wheat harvest operations, but some women are now being used for driving tractors, shocking bundles, and similar work. The wheat harvest creates one of the major farm labor problems.

Rice harvest (23) is very similar to the wheat harvest, being a mechanical operation but requiring much extra labor. Men are required for most of the rice harvest work.

In many areas, especially the Midwest, much of the corn harvesting (19) and silage making (29) is a mechanical operation. However, in other areas, corn and silage are harvested largely by hand. This is hard work and can be done more efficiently by men. Sweet-corn harvesting (10) is rather hard work, but sometimes is done by youth and women.

However, corn detasseling (22) is a job ideally suited to women and youth. It is hand work, and consists of going down certain rows in the field and removing the tassels from every stalk. The purpose is to prevent self-pollination in order to produce hybrid seed corn, which normally results in a much larger yield when planted the following year. Corn detasseling is a comparatively simple job which inexperienced workers can do satisfactorily after brief instruction.

MUCH HAND LABOR

The potato harvest (16), which occurs during the fall in the leading potato areas, requires a large amount of hand labor. Potatoes are removed from the ground by mechanical means, but completion of the harvest process requires picking up the potatoes from the ground by hand and placing them in baskets and then in barrels or sacks. Women and youth can be adept at doing this part of the harvest operation, and these two groups furnish many workers for this highly seasonal job. Handling of the barrels or sacks, of course, is done by men. In Maine, Idaho, and other leading potato States, the harvest occurs so late in the season that heavy loss from freezing is a danger unless adequate labor is available when the potatoes are ready for harvest.

Production of peanuts (18) is concentrated in three separate areas of the South, the largest acreage being in the Southeast. Peanuts are dug from the ground by mechanical means, but much hand labor is necessary in shaking the dirt from the peanuts and in placing the vines in stacks. Peanuts are usually left in the stacks about 6 weeks before the nuts are removed from the vines by a mechanical peanut picker. The heaviest labor needs, however, are in the first operation of shaking and stacking the peanuts, for which women and youth can be used.

Harvesting of hay (20) and peas (21) is heavy work that requires additional labor. Some women and youth can be used in certain phases of the work, depending upon the method used.

Tobacco harvesting (24) is handled in some areas by the regular farm labor force, which includes women and youngsters. In other areas, extra workers are required, and some nonfarm women and youth are employed in the tobacco harvest.

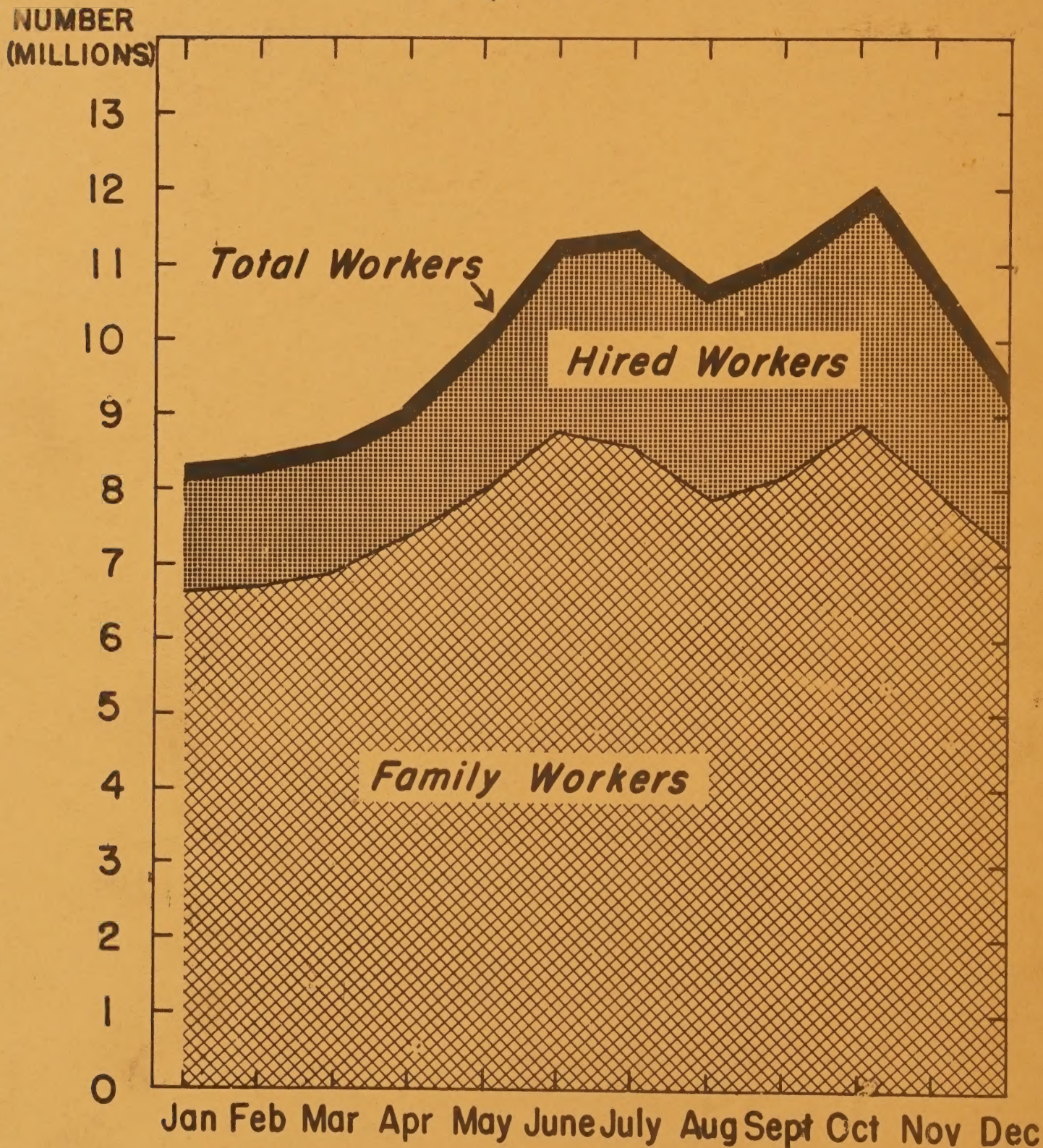
Another farm labor job done largely by women and youth is picking hops (28). This is a simple operation and is comparatively light work. Most of the hops are grown in Oregon and California, and are harvested during the late summer and early fall.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The material in this booklet was prepared cooperatively by the Extension Service, the Office of Labor, and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. All farm labor needs are estimates, based on past experience plus a knowledge of the job to be done in 1945. This publication is a revision of "Farm Labor Needs in 1944."

Total Farm Employment United States 1944



Source: BAE Monthly Farm Labor Reports